



North Carolina Museum of Art

## Being a Docent at the NCMA Frequently Asked Questions

### What are docents?

Docents are guides in museums who engage diverse visitors in varied ways to create personally relevant, participatory, and multi-sensory experiences in the galleries. The word docent comes from the Latin "*docere*," which means "to teach."

### What do NCMA docents do?

NCMA docents encourage visitors to actively engage with the art in front of them through questions, activities, and conversations in the galleries. Such experiences help visitors link the Museum's collection to their interests and the broader world.

This year, the North Carolina Museum of Art is seeking docent candidates who:

- Are interested in teaching kindergarten to high school students and youth in the galleries, especially students 4 to 9 years old.
- Have experience working with people with disabilities, or
- Can give tours in a second language, especially Spanish.
- Can commit to at least three years of year-round service, including a first year of training.

### Who do NCMA docents teach?

Public visitors from preschoolers to adult, including:

- PreK–12<sup>th</sup> grade students and youth.
- Adults.
- People whose primary language is not English.
- Older adults with cognitive loss.
- People with developmental or physical disabilities.

### What does it take to be a docent?

- Being part of a community of learners who are interested in addressing their audiences' varied needs, abilities, and interests.
- Punctuality, dependability, flexibility.
- Ability to stand/walk for two hours.
- Ability to use email and access web resources consistently.
- Being available to teach one day a week during public hours (Tuesday–Friday, Saturday, and Sunday between 10 am and 5 pm; or Friday between 5 and 9 pm).
- Observing at least five tours by different docents to get a sense of the range of possible touring styles.
- Having the skills, attitude, and judgment to professionally represent the Museum and to help it succeed in its mission; being invested in advancing the visitors' use and support of the Museum.

- Giving, receiving, and reflecting upon feedback from peers, visitors, and Museum staff.
- Attending at least 15 weekly professional development sessions on Mondays from September–April (out of a schedule of approximately 30 sessions).
  - New docents meet from 1:30 to 3:30 pm (daytime docents) or from 6 to 8 pm.
  - Experienced docents meet for professional development from 10:30 am to noon or from 6 to 7:30 pm.
  - Optional sessions occur outside of these days and hours as well.

### **How much time does it take to be a docent?**

At least three hours a week, not including travel and tour preparation time.

- Initial training takes two to three hours per week January–May and September–December.
- After initial training, docents attend 1½ hour professional development sessions on Mondays September–May (10:30 am–noon or 6–7:30 pm).
- Once trained, docents are available to facilitate tours for at least 32 weeks of the year. Docents are expected to be at the Museum 20 minutes before the tour start time, a commitment of 1½ hours each week, not including travel time.
- Tour preparation varies considerably from docent to docent but can include reading, writing tour plans, or designing and gathering materials to use on your tours. There are also resources available for use on tours at the Museum.

### **What support will I have as a new docent?**

Museum staff and experienced docents are there to answer questions, find information, and give ideas for facilitating your tours. As a docent you are part of a learning, teaching community. Every docent has something to contribute to this larger community, whether knowledge, experience, or understanding.

### **What does initial training include?**

Training on site includes online components, readings, discussion forums, and assignments. Six months into training, you will be asked to select a tour day (Tuesday–Sunday) and attend in-gallery sessions with NCMA staff (Monday). You will work with other experienced docents to help facilitate tours, with the goal of teaching independently by December.

### **What is the busiest time of year for docents?**

The busiest months for school tours are October through mid-December, except for Thanksgiving, and March through mid-May.